CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A method of refunding postage, comprising:

5   storing information for a postage transaction in a database, the postage transaction

information comprising a tracking ID and an associated delivery status;

receiving a postage refund inquiry; and

retrieving the postage transaction information from the database in response to the

postage refund inquiry.

10   2.   The method of claim 1, further comprising refunding the postage based on the

retrieved postage transaction information.

3.   The method of claim 1, further comprising displaying the postage transaction

information.

4.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

15   receiving confirmatory delivery status information associated with the tracking ID; and

updating the delivery status in the database with the confirmatory delivery status

information.

5.   The method of claim 1, wherein the postage transaction information further

comprises a postage transaction date.

20   6.   The method of claim 1, wherein the postage transaction information further

comprises a postage transaction date, postage transaction time, destination zip code, service

class, postage amount, and mail piece weight.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the confirmatory delivery status information is received from a postal authority.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the postage refund inquiry is received from an account administrator.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the postage refund inquiry is received from an end user.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the postage is refunded based on the delivery status contained within the retrieved postage transaction information.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the postage is refunded only if the retrieved delivery status indicates that a mail piece associated with the tracking ID has not been delivered.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein the postage is not refunded if the retrieved delivery status indicates that a mail piece associated with the tracking ID has been delivered.

13. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

applying the tracking ID to a mail piece;

processing the mail piece through a postal authority;

reading the tracking ID on the mail piece; and

updating the confirmatory delivery status information to indicate that the mail piece has been delivered.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the postage is not refunded.

15. A method of refunding postage, comprising:

storing information for a plurality of postage transactions in a database, the information for each postage transaction comprising a tracking ID, postage transaction date, and delivery status associated with the tracking ID;

associating the stored postage transaction information with a user account;

receiving a postage refund inquiry for the user account;

retrieving the postage transaction information from the database in response to the

postage refund inquiry; and

5   refunding the postage for a first postage transaction only if the delivery status for the first

postage transaction indicates that a mail piece associated with the tracking ID for the first

postage transaction has not been delivered, and the postage transaction dates for the first and

second postage transactions are the same.

16.   The method of claim 15,

10   wherein the information for each postage transaction comprises a destination zip code,

service class, and postage amount; and

wherein the postage is refunded only if the destination zip codes, service classes, and

postage amounts for the first and second postage transactions are the same.

17.   The method of claim 15, further comprising:

15   receiving confirmatory delivery status information associated with the plurality of

tracking ID's; and

updating the plurality of delivery statuses in the database with the confirmatory delivery

status information.

18.   The method of claim 17, wherein the confirmatory delivery status information is

20   received from a postal authority.

19.   The method of claim 15, wherein the postage refund inquiry is received from an

account administrator.

20. The method of claim 15, wherein the postage refund inquiry is received from an end user.

21. The method of claim 15, further comprising:

applying the plurality of tracking ID's to a plurality of mail pieces;

5 processing the plurality of mail pieces through a postal authority;

reading the tracking ID on a mail piece; and

updating the confirmatory delivery status information to indicate that the plurality of mail pieces have been delivered.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the postage is not refunded.

10 23. A method of providing status for a plurality of mail pieces tracked by a postal authority, comprising:

storing information for a plurality of postage transactions in a database, the information for each postage transaction comprising a tracking ID and an associated delivery status;

receiving confirmatory delivery status information from the postal authority; and

15 updating the plurality of delivery statuses in the database with the confirmatory delivery status information.

24. The method of claim 23, further comprising associating the stored postage transaction information with a plurality of user accounts.

25. The method of claim 23, wherein the information for each postage transaction

20 further comprises a postage transaction date.

26. The method of claim 23, wherein the information for each postage transaction further comprises a postage transaction date, postage transaction time, destination zip code, service class, postage amount, and mail piece weight.

27. The method of claim 23, further comprising:

applying the plurality of tracking ID's to a plurality of mail pieces;

processing the plurality of mail pieces through a postal authority;

reading the plurality of tracking ID's on the plurality of mail pieces; and

5   updating the confirmatory delivery status information to indicate that the plurality of mail

pieces have been delivered.

28. A centralized postage-issuing computer system for providing status for a plurality

of mail pieces tracked by a postal service, comprising:

data processing circuitry;

10   a database;

a communications module, when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured

for receiving confirmatory delivery status information from a master tracking computer system;

and

a database management module, when executed by the data processing circuitry,

15   configured for storing information for a plurality of postage transactions in a database, the

information for each postage transaction comprising a tracking ID and an associated delivery

status, the database management module further configured for updating the delivery status with

the confirmatory delivery status information.

29. The centralized postage-issuing computer system of claim 28, further comprising

20   a delivery status request module, when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for

generating a request for the confirmatory delivery status information, wherein the

communications module is further configured for transmitting the request to the master tracking

computer system.

30.   The centralized postage-issuing computer system of claim 28, wherein the database management module is further configured for associating the stored postage transaction information with a plurality of user accounts.

31.   The centralized postage-issuing computer system of claim 28, wherein the information for each postage transaction further comprises a postage transaction date.

32.   The centralized postage-issuing computer system of claim 28, wherein the information for each postage transaction further comprises a postage transaction date, postage transaction time, destination zip code, service class, postage amount, and mail piece weight.

33.   A method of determining whether issued postage has been used, comprising:

storing information for a plurality of postage transactions in a database, the information for each postage transaction comprising one or more postage transaction items, a tracking ID and an associated delivery status;

associating the postage transaction information with a user account;

receiving an inquiry for duplicative postage transactions;

retrieving the postage transaction information from the database;

selecting the postage transactions in which the one or more postage transaction items are identical; and

determining if any of the delivery statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered.

34.   The method of claim 33, further comprising displaying the selected postage transactions to a postal authority.

35. The method of claim 33, further comprising determining that issued postage is unused if the any delivery statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered.

36. The method of claim 33, further comprising displaying the postage transaction information for the selected postage transactions.

37. The method of claim 33, wherein the one or more postage transaction items comprises a postage transaction date, destination zip code, service class, and postage amount.

38. The method of claim 33, further comprising:

receiving confirmatory delivery status information; and

updating the delivery statuses in the database with the confirmatory delivery status information.

39. The method of claim 38, wherein the confirmatory delivery status information is received from a postal authority.

40. The method of claim 38, wherein the duplicative postage transaction inquiry is received from an account administrator.

41. The method of claim 38, wherein the duplicative postage transaction inquiry is received from an end user.

42. The method of claim 38, further comprising:

applying the plurality of tracking ID's to a plurality of mail pieces;

processing the plurality of mail pieces through a postal authority;

reading the plurality of tracking ID's on the plurality of mail pieces; and

updating the confirmatory delivery status information to indicate that the plurality of mail pieces have been delivered.

43. The method of claim 42, further comprising determining that issued postage is not unused.

44. A centralized postage-issuing computer system for determining whether issued postage has been used, comprising:

5   data processing circuitry;

a database;

a communications module, when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for receiving an inquiry for duplicative postage transactions; and

a database management module, when executed by the data processing circuitry,

10   configured for storing information for a plurality of postage transactions in a database, the information for each postage transaction comprising one or more postage transaction items, a tracking ID and an associated delivery status, the database management module further configured for associating the postage transaction information with a user account; and

a filtering module, when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for

15   selecting the postage transactions in which the one or more postage transaction items are identical, and determining if any of the delivery statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered.

45. The centralized postage-issuing computer system of claim 44, wherein the filtering module is further configured for determining that issued postage is unused if the any

20   delivery statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered.

46.   The centralized postage-issuing computer system of claim 44, wherein the one or more postage transaction items comprises a postage transaction date, destination zip code, service class, and postage amount.

47.   The centralized postage-issuing computer system of claim 44, wherein the communications module is further configured for receiving confirmatory delivery status information, and the database management module is further configured for updating the delivery statuses with the confirmatory delivery status information.